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RUEHHM/AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH CITY 2773

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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: NEW DISSIDENT SHOW TRIALS PLANNED IN HCMC

¶1. (SBU) HCMC print and broadcast media prominently reported May 4 that the GVN plans to conduct two new trials of political activists in HCMC in May. Three members of the People's Democratic Party of Vietnam, Le Nguyen Sang, Huynh Nguyen Dao and Nguyen Bac Truyen, will be brought to trial in HCMC on May 10 for "conducting anti-GVN propaganda" under article 88 of the Penal Code. According to the press reports, Le Nguyen Sang, a medical doctor, received orders from his U.S.-based associate, Do Cong Thanh, to print and disseminate 1,600 fliers in HCMC with "distorted, anti-GVN, anti-Party content." Nguyen Bac Truyen, a lawyer, was deemed responsible for organizing the PDP-VN in HCMC. Truyen was also ordered to spread anti-GVN fliers but reportedly was too scared to do so. Huynh Nguyen Dao, another private businessman in HCMC, was allegedly responsible for writing anti-GVN materials the dissemination of 400 fliers printed by Sang.

¶2. (SBU) A separate trial will be held for 8406 Bloc member and independent union organizer Tran Quoc Hien on May 15 in HCMC. Hien, Director of Saigon Legal Consultancy, is accused of "inciting" land protestors to demonstrate and of writing and disseminating on the Internet anti-Party and anti-GVN materials. He has been charged under Article 88 of the penal code for "anti-GVN propaganda" and under Article 89 for "disturbing security."

¶3. (SBU) HCMC television reported prominently that the HCMC Communist Party Committee on Internal Political Security called a meeting with the HCMC judges and prosecutors responsible for the two dissident cases. The Party officials emphasized the seriousness of the defendants' "violations of law," and instructed the courts to impose heavy prison sentences.

¶4. (SBU) Family members of the four defendants told us that they were unaware of the impending trials. Separately, the lawyer for 8406 Bloc Member Truong Quoc Huy told us that he has yet to be notified of a new trial date for his client. Huy's April 16 trial was postponed.

¶5. (SBU) Comment: The public announcement of the new dissident trials coupled with ongoing media broadsides against other detained dissidents (lawyers Nguyen Van Dai and Le Thi Cong Nhan will be tried May 11 in Hanoi) indicate that the GVN is pressing forward with its dissident crackdown. The Consul General and HCMC PolOff will seek government permission to attend the trials. Although the Party is routinely involved in directing the outcome of "sensitive" cases, this is the first time of which we are aware that the Party has explicitly and publicly showcased its control over the judicial process. End Comment.

¶6. (SBU) Additional information on the four dissidents follows:

-- Huynh Nguyen Dao, aka Huynh Viet Lang, has been in custody

since August 15, 2006. Dao, 38, was trained as a reporter and has a BA in Marxist-Leninist philosophy.

Born 1968, he studied in HCMC University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Philosophy faculty.

-- Le Nguyen Sang, aka Nguyen Hoang Long, also was arrested on August 15, 2006. Sang, 48, graduated from Hue medical school and runs a private clinic and pharmacy in HCMC. He is a member of the Central Committee of the PDP-VN. The leaflets he produced and distributed called for the elimination of Article Four of the Vietnamese Constitution, which codifies single party rule in Vietnam.

-- Nguyen Bac Truyen, 37, reportedly was trained as a lawyer, although he was not registered by the HCMC Bar Association. He is a member of the Central Committee of the PDP-VN. Truyen has been in custody since January 2007.

-- Tran Quoc Hien is a member of the 8406 Bloc dissident movement as well as spokesperson for the United Workers-Farmers Organization (UWFO) of Viet Nam. Hien was arrested in January 2007.

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